

San Juan River Basin Recovery Implementation Program Coordination Committee

September 19, 2000
Farmington, New Mexico

Welcome and Introductions: Renne Lohofener, Committee Chairman, welcomed everyone to the meeting. Coordination Committee members and the audience introduced themselves. Members in attendance included:

Renne Lohofener, Chairman	US Fish and Wildlife Service, Reg. 2
Patty Worthing	US Fish and Wildlife Service, Reg. 6
Bob Krakow	US Bureau of Indian Affairs
Bill Miller, for Scott McElroy	Southern Ute Indian Tribe
Stanley Pollack, for Dan Israel	Ute Mountain Ute Tribe
Jessica Aberly	Jicarilla Apache Tribe
Christine Karas	US Bureau of Reclamation
Joel Farrell	US Bureau of Land Management
Brent Uilenberg	US Bureau of Reclamation
Stanley Pollack	Navajo Nation
Tom Pitts	Water Development
Randy Seaholm	State of Colorado
John Whipple	State of New Mexico

Also in attendance were Jim Brooks, Biology Committee Chairman; Errol Jensen, Hydrology Committee Chairman; and Shirley Mondy, Program Coordinator.

Dan Israel and Scott McElroy were in Washington, D.C., and unable to attend the meeting.

Joy Nicholopoulos, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, was introduced as the new Chairman for the Coordination Committee replacing Renne Lohofener. Cindy Schulz will continue to handle section 7 duties for the Program. Michael Schoessler was introduced as the new Department of the Interior solicitor for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Region 2.

Review and Approve Agenda: Members reviewed the agenda. The section 7 update was moved to the afternoon. Brent Uilenberg and Errol Jensen agreed to give a brief update on the Navajo/Gallup Pipeline (Pipeline) and the Navajo Dam Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Jim Brooks, Biology Committee Chairman, was asked to cover the Program Evaluation Report, Long Range Plan, and endangered fish recovery goals during the Biology Committee update.

Approval of Coordination Committee Conference Call Summary, August 30, 2000: The summary was approved and accepted after requested changes from Bob Krakow were made.

Approval of Coordination Committee Meeting Summary of June 14, 2000: The summary was approved and accepted.

Old Business:

Coordination Update:

Action Items:

–The Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) need to furnish ideas/suggestions for a Congressional tour. The tour will take place in Spring 2001. The tour had to be pushed back since the Congressional Liaison position with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 2, has not been filled.

–No comments have been received yet on the Outreach Plan. Please send any comments to Shirley Mondy.

–The recovery goals for the Upper Basin Program have not been finalized yet so there is no Notice of Availability.

–The Hydrology Committee still does not have representatives from all Program participants.

–The BIA has still not furnished a breakdown of expenditures for fish passages at Hogback and Cudei diversion dams.

–Copies of the Program Evaluation Report are being distributed to all Program members.

–The public/general listserver will be available soon.

–The draft Work Plan for 2001 was sent to all Coordination Committee members.

Biology Committee Update:

–The Biology Committee met in Durango, Colorado, on August 16-17 to work on the 2001 Work Plan submission.

–Biology Committee members discussed the Program Evaluation Report (PER) in depth. Members revised the objectives to include nonnative control. Goals in Chapter 5 were revised to provide better tracking between the PER and the Long-Range Plan.

–Several comments on the PER were received. Each comment was reviewed. However, not all requested changes were made. Changes made after the August 16-17, 2000, Biology meeting were not sent back to the Biology Committee since it was to be the last draft for the PER. It was noted that Tom Pitts wanted a separate goal for nonnative control. However, the Biology Committee opted to have it under the three current goals and not list it as a separate goal. The Peer Review Panel has also reviewed the PER. (Note: When the meeting summary was reviewed, there was some disagreement as to what Paul Holden was supposed to do regarding comments received from Coordination Committee members. The confusion was cleared up at the 01/30/01 Coordination Committee meeting.)

–Ron Bliesner is revising the Long-Range Plan based on comments at the meeting. The latest revision of the Long-Range Plan will be reviewed at the next Biology Committee meeting on Nov. 28, 2000, in Durango, Colorado.

–The State of Utah presented a proposal for the development of Recapture Reservoir as a sport fish area. Utah will be installing screening to prevent the movement of nonnative fish outside of the reservoir. The Biology Committee withdrew its recommendation for the proposal after they found out that tiger muskie were to be stocked in the reservoir. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 6, will have to consult with the State of Utah on the tiger muskie stocking since it would involve a Federal action.

Action Item: The States of Utah, Colorado, and Wyoming signed an agreement on nonnative stocking for the Upper Colorado Basins. Since there is a need for a similar agreement in the San Juan River Basin, Tom Pitts requested that Tom Nesler, State of Colorado, work with Dave Propst, State of New Mexico, on a similar agreement for the Basin area and report back to the Coordination Committee at the next scheduled meeting.

–Due to competition for camping sites along the river, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management has requested that researchers provide them with a schedule of when research will be conducted along the river and where as soon as possible. They want to reduce the amount of complaints due to competition for camping sites.

–The escalating problem with striped bass, a nonnative species, was covered at the last Biology Committee meeting. Striped bass numbers have increased dramatically and are impacting young suckers. There are proposals in the Work Plan to eliminate as many striped bass as possible. Fall monitoring will determine how large the removal effort should be.

–The Biology Committee gave a figure for the recovery goals for the Colorado pikeminnow and razorback sucker to Rich Valdez (contractor with Region 6, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) at the last Biology meeting on June 14, 2000. No one has heard anything since then.

–The Long-Range Plan is not finalized yet. The Biology Committee will be reviewing another draft at the November 28, 2000, meeting. After the Long-Range Plan is revised based on comments from that meeting, the draft will be sent to Coordination Committee members for comment and review. The Coordination Committee will then vote on whether to accept it.

Recovery goals for the roundtail chub could be included in the Long-Range Plan without requiring funding for implementation. The Plan could incorporate listed/non-listed species and identify which ones are part of the Program and identify possible non-Program funding sources for the others.

The Long-Range Plan will set the direction of the Program for the next several years. It was suggested that members meet to resolve issues involving the Long-Range Plan.

Discussion/Comments: Augmentation for the roundtail chub has the support of many Biology Committee members even though it is not a federally listed endangered species in the San Juan River Basin. However, it has threatened and/or endangered status with several states in the area. Tom Pitts felt that Program funds should not be spent on the roundtail chub since it is not a federally listed species. He felt Congress would question any expenditures for the chub within the Basin at this time. In seeking funding from Congress, Program members have to be very clear on where the money will be spent. It would be better to look into other sources of funding. However, some researchers as Paul Holden felt Program funds should be spent in an effort to prevent the roundtail chub from becoming threatened and/or endangered. He stated that the whole native fish community needs to be addressed by the Program; roundtail chub are a native fish species. Tom Pitts felt there needed to be increased coordination between the Biology and Coordination Committees.

Randy Seaholm stated that there needs to be two categories. The first would address the recovery of the Colorado pikeminnow and the razorback sucker. The other part would involve benefitting species that are important to the Program and would benefit the Program, such as the roundtail chub. Alternative/other sources of funding would be sought outside the Program to assist with recovery. (It was noted that the roundtail chub is an important prey base for other native fish such as the Colorado pikeminnow.)

Tom Pitts mentioned that Rich Valdez had developed a draft of the recovery goals for endangered fish species in the Upper Colorado River Basin. Two species covered by these goals are in the San Juan River Basin. These goals will be discussed in Region 6, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, on November 20. He felt members of the Biology Committee should have an opportunity to review the goals and comment on them. However, the draft recovery goals were only sent to people on the Management Committee for the Upper Colorado River Basin within Region 6. Renne Lohofener also felt it was important for Program members to comment on the recovery goals before they are published in the Federal Register.

Action Item: Patty Worthing will clarify the review process for the recovery goals with Region 6. Since the Program has responsibility for two species within the San Juan River Basin that are mentioned in the recovery goals, Program members should have an opportunity to review and comment on them.

Hydrology Committee Update:

–Randy Seaholm covered the draft Hydrology Committee proposal with the Coordination Committee. The most controversial part of the proposal dealt with the review of geomorphology issues by Hydrology Committee members. Currently, that is a responsibility of the Biology Committee since channel geomorphology covers habitat. Hydrology Committee members felt they had the expertise to also judge flows and how flows could change habitat geomorphology. The hydraulic aspects of flows do determine how channels change. It was pointed out that there is no clear distinction between Biology and Hydrology Committee responsibilities.

Bill Miller wanted to know what was the purpose of the Hydrology Committee addressing geomorphology issues which have traditionally been under the Biology Committee. Randy Seaholm responded that the Hydrology Committee wanted to address flows in the channel. Stanley Pollack stated that the Navajo Nation is opposed to the Hydrology Committee dealing with geomorphology issues. He felt the Hydrology Committee should strictly address modeling issues, which originally was the original intent when the Hydrology Committee was formed. (The Hydrology Committee was intended to replace the Navajo Dam Operations Committee, which did not have authority over geomorphology issues.) The Hydrology Committee is going beyond its previous scope of duties. He did not feel they should be given additional functions until the Coordination Committee sees how they will function. The Biology Committee has functioned well to date and produced products for the Program to use. At this point, he is not ready to expand the duties of the Hydrology Committee. Randy Seaholm stated that he wanted to show what type of work the Hydrology Committee is capable of doing and that they have the expertise to deal with geomorphology issues. Hydrology Committee members also want to be able to review and comment on geomorphology issues, including flows in the channels.

Tom Pitts felt the Biology Committee did not have the expertise to deal with geomorphology issues. To create habitat, dirt and rock must be moved around in the channel. Geomorphology issues need assessment by more than one person.

Renne Lohofener suggested that the Hydrology Committee work with the Biology Committee and provide recommendations to the Biology Committee. Jim Brooks indicated that the Biology Committee would be willing to work with the Hydrology Committee on geomorphology issues. If the two committees could not resolve differences, the issue would be elevated to the Coordination Committee.

It was pointed out that a geomorphologist is a member of the Peer Review panel which reviews all Biology Committee documents and research.

Further Discussion: Jim Brooks stated that he had received comments from Biology Committee members on further wording changes in the Hydrology Committee proposal. He wanted to know why the phrase “meeting the flow recommendations” was changed to “providing flows required for native fish.” Randy Seaholm stated that the Hydrology Committee was trying to broaden the language. Renne Lohofener wanted to know if the language could be changed to state “provide flows to meet the recovery needs for endangered fish.” Stanley Pollack felt there should be some explanation as to how the flow recommendations fit into the overall Program.

Jim Brooks reiterated that the flow recommendation document does not say that the recommended flows have to be met 100 percent of the time. There is latitude and flexibility in the flow recommendation report—the flow recommendations are workable. There is an adaptive management process. He asked if the wording change was consistent with other Program documents.

Action Item: Randy Seaholm will revise the Hydrology Committee proposal based on comments he received and send it out for further review and comments.

The next Hydrology Committee meeting is scheduled for October 3, 2000, in Farmington, New Mexico. The meeting will begin at 8:30 a.m. Anyone with substantive comments should contact Mr. Seaholm by September 26, 2000, and plan on attending the next meeting.

There are still no representatives on the Committee from the Bureau of Land Management, the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, and the Southern Ute Indian Tribe. Bill Miller indicated that the Southern Ute Indian Tribe would be furnishing a representative soon. The Bureau of Land Management will not be represented on the Committee according to Joel Farrell, and no decision has been made by the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe.

Funding Update:

The bill to fund the San Juan River Basin Recovery Implementation Program passed in the House of Representatives, as well as the Senate Committee. It is scheduled for the floor of the Senate with only minor word changes. Tom Pitts is hopeful the Senate will adopt the House version, and it will go to the floor of the Senate. The bill has bipartisan support. He expects it to pass through the Senate. However, if it does not pass, Program members will have to seriously review how the Program’s limited funds will be spent and prioritize work proposals.

Capital Projects:

Brent Uilenberg stated that the design work on the PNM weir is proceeding. The Bureau of Reclamation hopes to put the fish passage out for bid in early 2001 with construction starting by fall 2001. The BOR’s Boise Field Office will work on the Environmental Assessment.

The BOR transferred \$400,000 to BIA as a partial reimbursement for expenditures they incurred at Hogback. They are hoping to transfer additional funds to BIA in 2001. However, BOR has

still not gotten a cost breakdown of expenses from BIA. A total reimbursement figure of \$2 million will be honored. The transfer of funds to BIA will count against the \$18 million in funding legislation for the San Juan Program. The reimbursement figure is based on BIA breakdown of costs.

Dam Modifications:

John Whipple is concerned that the \$18 million legislative funding package may not cover the cost for all capital projects that are needed. He is worried that thermal modifications at Navajo Dam, if needed, will be too costly—and are those modifications really necessary and feasible. Other sources of funding might have to be sought.

Tom Pitts voiced concern over the selection of the most expensive alternative for the PNM weir design. He questioned the design of a 24-foot long tunnel and asked if it is just an expensive experiment. Brent Uilenberg pointed out that the design was based on recommendations from both TetraTech, a consulting firm working with PNM, and Biology Committee members. It was also pointed out that the tunnel technology has been used successfully in other parts of the country such as the Northwest. TetraTech is currently working on some new design ideas according to Rob Ashman, representative for PNM.

Section 7 Update:

Tom Pitts distributed the latest updated version of the principles for conducting section 7 consultations. Most requested changes dealt with area 7.a.1 on conservation measures. Tom Pitts will make the requested changes and send the document out for further review. Renne Lohofener wanted Region 6 and the Dept. of Interior solicitor to review the document before it is adopted. It was pointed out by Cindy Schulz, Region 2, that the document would not cover any new non-fish species in the San Juan River area that become threatened or endangered.

Action Item: Tom Pitts will revise the document and ask for further comments, as well as solicitor review. A conference call will then be held to adopt/approve the document.

Navajo EIS:

Brent Uilenberg reported that the low flow test was cancelled this past summer. The BOR had wanted to have it to see how various entities were affected by having 250 cfs in the river. However, the test was not held due to detrimental impacts in the critical habitat area. Since the test is needed, the EIS may be delayed until it is done. No one is sure yet how late the EIS will be.

Navajo/Gallup Pipeline:

Errol Jensen reported that work is proceeding on the Pipeline project, including the EIS. Problems with the Riverware model have caused delays. Work will continue next year on designs, plans, and the EIS. Hopefully, within a year, BOR will have an answer on the water supply.

Work Plan 2001:

Shirley Mondy gave members a rundown on changes in the 2001 Work Plan. Members were also given a handout on the changes, as well as receiving a copy via e-mail. Program Coordination, Hydrology Committee proposals, and Biology Committee proposals were each listed separately. She asked that Committee members let her know if they like the new format.

Members then discussed what projects should be under base funding and under capital funding. Funding for the various projects is dependent upon the legislative funding request passing. If it doesn't, members will have to look at the money available and prioritize projects.

Brent Uilenberg stated that if the legislative funding bill does not pass, he might be able to reprogram some BOR money to assist the Program. Over \$2.6 million is programmed in the 2001 budget. If the bill does not pass, the Program would have to live within funding available through BOR. All amounts listed in the Work Plan 2001 assume that the legislation will pass.

Discussion/Comments:

Christine Karas stated that it would be helpful in the future to have detailed Work Plan proposals for evaluation. Many proposals needed further clarification, as well as citations. She also would like to see a list of deliverables to track. Jim Brooks asked if the Upper Basin Program had a standardized format for budget proposal submissions. Steve Harris mentioned that it would be good to show which goal a specific proposal correlates with.

Action Item: Shirley Mondy will develop a format to be used in future Work Plans based on comments.

Some members could not approve the Water Temperature Modeling proposal until they talk further with Ron Bliesner to clarify the scope of work. Brent Uilenberg felt that BOR staff could and should do the work in-house with funding provided by the Program. (It was pointed out that the BOR representative on the Biology Committee approved the proposal from Ron Bliesner.) The work involves a BOR facility. Coordination Committee members from BOR felt their agency should play a major role in doing the actual research. Paul Holden pointed out that the proposal involved biology issues and that the Biology Committee needed to see the results of the work being done.

Action Item: The Coordination Committee decided to table the Water Temperature Modeling proposal for a year until BOR and Ron Bliesner are able to work out the issues involved with the proposal. The proposal will be reviewed in the 2002 budget.

The Roundtail Chub Proposal: The water development steering committee would support the proposal if the States of Colorado and New Mexico funded it or sought/found non-Program funding sources. Some Program members did not want to use Program monies for a species currently not listed as threatened or endangered by the Federal Government. Dave Propst mentioned that the State of Utah could also be a participant. He felt the fish should be a part of the Program since it is a native fish. The States of Colorado and New Mexico will look into seeking funding through joint section 6 proposals for the roundtail chub. Renne Lohofener also favored a multi-state effort and proposal for the project through section 6. Randy Seaholm also wanted to see the project move forward through a state effort.

Action Item: Regions 2 and 6, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, will work with Dave Propst in identifying and securing non-Program funding for work on the Roundtail Chub.

Shirley Mondy will send out revised tables for the budget on Wednesday, September 20, to Committee members. The FY2001 Work Plan, minus the water temperature study and with minor modifications to the capital project dollar figures by the Bureau of Reclamation, was approved by the Coordination Committee.

Action Items:

–**State of Colorado:** The States of Utah, Colorado, and Wyoming signed an agreement on nonnative stocking. Since there is a need for a similar agreement in the San Juan River Basin, Tom Pitts requested that Tom Nesler, State of Colorado, work with the State of New Mexico on a similar agreement for the Basin area and report back to the Coordination Committee at the next scheduled meeting.

–**Recovery Goals:** Patty Worthing will clarify the review process for the recovery goals with Region 6. Since the Program has responsibility for two species within the San Juan River Basin that are mentioned in the recovery goals, Program members should have an opportunity to review on comment on them.

–**Hydrology Committee Proposal:** Randy Seaholm will revise the proposal based on comments he received and send it back out to Committee members for further comment and review.

–The Hydrology Committee still lacks members on the committee from the Southern Ute Indian Tribe, the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, and the Bureau of Land Management.

–**Section 7:** Tom Pitts will rewrite the document and ask for further comments, as well as solicitor review. A conference call will then be held to adopt/approve the document.

–**Work Plan:** Shirley Mondy will develop a format to be used in future Work Plans based on comments.

–**Water Temperature Modeling Proposal:** The Coordination Committee decided to table this proposal for a year, and asked BOR and Ron Bliesner to work out the issues that were raised. The proposal will be reviewed in the 2002 budget.

–**Roundtail Chub:** Regions 2 and 6, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, will work with Dave Propst in identifying and securing non-Program funding for work on the Roundtail Chub.

–**The Bureau of Indian Affairs** needs to furnish a breakdown of costs incurred at the Hogback and Cudei diversion dams before further reimbursement can be made.

Further Discussion:

If the legislative bill for Program funding does not pass, Program members will need to meet to discuss the budget again. A conference call could be held to prioritize the 2001 Work Plan proposals.

Brent Uilenberg cited the need for more definition in the Long-Range Plan for capital projects. To date, the only capital projects agreed to are at Hogback/Cudei diversion dams and the PNM weir. Tom Pitts asked if fish screens would be needed in the future on major diversions. He felt the Biology Committee should address that issue. He also mentioned that the Program should look into the Fish and Wildlife Foundation handling program funds in an interest bearing account. The Foundation does have a management fee (3 percent), but this cost could be recovered by placing the money in an interest-bearing account. The Foundation is a good vehicle for moving Program funding.

Next Meeting Date:

If funding legislation does not pass, members will hold a conference call on October 19, 2000, at 2:00 p.m. to discuss how Fiscal Year 2001 funding will be divided between the Biology and Hydrology Committees, and Program Coordination and Management. If funding legislation does pass, members will hold a regular meeting on January 30, 2001 in Farmington, New Mexico.

The meeting adjourned at 3:00 p.m.